



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
Ministry for Health & Environment
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PRESS RELEASE

No. 398/2013

Date: 7th June 2013

Fishing issue was of the Opposition's own making

The GSD Opposition seems to think that Gibraltar has forgotten that the fishing issue was of its own making, in arriving at the 1999 'Fishing Agreement', which created all the ambiguities that they are now trying to pin on the Government.

It was the GSD Government that entered into an agreement that everybody knows allowed fishing against the laws of Gibraltar even though they claimed and still claim that it did not. It was the GSD Government that let Spain gain a foothold on our waters, even failing to detect its declaration of a European protected zone. The GSD at the time failed abysmally to grasp the nettle, and fobbed off the issue, leaving it "to another day". It is the Government *now*, a Government that understands all the principles involved, as well as being acutely aware of the politics of the matter, that is working solidly to resolve all the complexities created and arrive at a permanent solution.

The GSD, in dismissing the importance of the marine environment with the words "we have no fishing industry", immediately shows its ignorance. There are many in Gibraltar who fish, recreationally, and as cottage industries, and many who enjoy marine life through diving, etc. There are also international obligations which relate to the marine environment which require Gibraltar to be vigilant in the protection of its marine resources.

The GSD in Government singularly failed to engage in international bodies with a bearing on the Mediterranean, allowing Spain unrestricted influence therein. A European marine protected area (SAC) is declared for a reason. Indeed, in Spain's so-called 'Estrecho Oriental' SAC, which Gibraltar and the UK dispute, there are rules setting strict controls over fishing activities, including total exclusion zones. Gibraltar's case, that it is well able to apply European law in its own waters, could be prejudiced if it did not have a management and protection regime.

What the GSD also failed to do, was properly manage any aspect of marine activities. The campaign by GFSA and its famous red lines, condemning uncontrolled exploitation of our shores have not been forgotten by the GSLP/Liberal Government. The GSD would not know either, how much work and time is involved in researching, consulting stakeholders, and holding meaningful meetings with all interested groups, as it never consulted any with

any thoroughness or interest. This Government has held regular meetings and discussed its proposals at length with many groups, because it seriously cares about the wishes and interests of those affected.

The marine regulations shortly to be introduced will be one of many steps taken to properly manage the marine environment. Other measures, as was clearly stated in the Government's press release, will result in much more information and an increase in fish populations, which is an essential prerequisite to any change in the management plan. But first there must be a real, and credible management plan. This never existed in the days of the GSD which did absolutely nothing to tackle the concerns of the local fishing and sea users' community.

As the Government has already stated, the coming weeks and months will reveal the full extent of the marine strategy, which, once fully deployed, will fully address Gibraltar's responsibilities and jurisdiction for British Gibraltar Territorial Waters.